

The Hole

May 1998



Mount Wachusett Community College

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All students are welcome to submit their original writings and artwork to be considered for publishing in The Mole or i magazine. Submissions may be given to any of the staff, or placed in their mailboxes.

Factory

It was an assembly line.

It had lots of people doing lots of things.

It was repetitious work.

There were machines, machines that we brought to life, at the expense of our own, everyday. Their sounds put me in a trance after about an hour. That repetitious work followed by the sounds of all the machines. After a while I couldn't have been any closer to dancing right there at my station. My hydraulic machine with its beautiful sounds transformed into a single instrument playing in harmony with an entire orchestra. The rhythms, the rawness, and then one sound seemed to rise and shine as it separated itself from its colleagues; and, as if with permission from the other machines, it did a solo, a solo that came at the right time and just worked. It was the girl over on machine 7, she played it so well, did anybody else recognize the music fighting through the ear plugs?

Time to go to break.

When I got back everything changed.

The rhythm was gone.

All I heard was noise.

My body was getting sore sitting on the stool.

I started thinking about fishing.

I started thinking about a new job.

by Keith Whitehead

I lost an hour this weekend—where did it go? They just took it away from me when they made me set my clock ahead! I was going to do something profound in that hour—now I'm left with my schedule an hour short and no time to do the thing that I had planned to do. All my other time is scheduled—even writing this essay had to be fit into my calendar. But I can't break away from the demands of my datebook, especially now that I am an hour short. I must adhere to the plan. It's too bad that I didn't have time to do that thing, for it may have freed us all from the confines of the calendar—but alas, there is no time and now it's worse than ever because, after all, I'm an hour short.

What to do, what to do? Maybe I could run from my responsibilities and steal some scheduled time to change the world...That would take a lot of courage, though, because how would I explain where I got the time to do what I did now that I'm already behind? Just how does one make up an hour? Drive faster to work only to be stopped by a policeman doing his job and thereby causing me to be even later than ever? How about if I don't take time to eat, sleep, study or write? No, I guess I'd better just stick to my schedule and forget about the great things I would have done if I hadn't been forced to give up that one hour...

by Faye Arey

It's Spring!

In the whole universe, every creature revolts
Thunderously awaken from lengthy nights
Somber days are left behind
Spring forward, the future awaits
Potential hope of life ahead
Rush forward, to grasp for chances
In struggle that has sequence
Nourishing the future bud
Glorious! The spring of success!

by Xuyen Nguyen

One man moves out the glass sliding door into the yard. The music, loud inside, is muffled when he closes the door. Moths fling themselves against the warmth of the porch light. He moves away from it, and down the stairs onto the lawn. The moths do not follow.

He takes out his pack and shakes one out, careful to feel for the filter to make sure it is not the one that has been turned upside down. Its stupid, he thought, but why mess with it. He flicked the Bic and sighed. He sat down facing the house and the door, facing anywhere else would have made him look over his shoulder at every noise. He always remembers his dad saying Billy the Kid or someone was shot in the back when he sat with it to the door. Another stupid habit.

He had come outside to smoke, but he also didn't like being around the goat they had brought inside. Somebody thought that'd be funny, and in their drunken stupor, it must have been. But the intoxicated society in there didn't notice the smell. He decided it wouldn't be good to go to this sort of shindig anymore and not drink. You are supposed to be drinking here. But he had decided not to...

He sees them in their stupor, with a clear gaze. They talk about beer, and beer, and beer, and sex. He sees them, and their ideas, and their future. But it is not his. He has to leave that society to be happy. His fake laughs at poor insights and notions of deep thoughts are not fulfilling.

Only his thoughts of her are fulfilling. Not his future, which is unpleasantly uncertain, and not his friends, and not noble notions of the kind of man he wanted to be and the kind of man he has become, just her. She is uncomfortable with him relying on her like that.

The door's latch was jiggled, drawing his attention. Fred was trying to come outside but had trouble with the lock. It opened, and he tripped onto the porch. He grabbed a railing with one hand and steadied himself with a belt of what was in the plastic cup in his other hand. He gazed over the field until he saw the crouched figure in the dark. Fred stumbled over empty bottles and over the lawn with difficulty, calling for his companion. "Wayne? Is that you there, Wayne?"

"Yeah, Fred, right here. Take it easy, Chief, just sit down," he said softly through the smoke.

"Ya know, Wayne," Fred said between gulps, "You really should be drinking. Everyone else is...I don't know, it's just not right."

"I have decided not to, Fred, that's all. And I have to come here, or I'd just sit at home alone all the time," Wayne said. "But maybe that wouldn't be so bad after all, huh?"

Fred mumbled something else and got up. He walked away and up the steps. With his hand on the door he turned around and drawled, "Fine. You just stay out there, then."

Good, Fred, he thought, you just keep drinking. I'm outta here. I'll drive by her house, and see if she is still up.

by Jack Kennedy

I am very good
at not letting myself feel
or want you
or ache for you
Very good
at letting the burn inside of me
die out.

Water soaked fantasies
puddle inside my womb
so that your stare
your essence and your heat
will not penetrate through
into that place
where I cannot deny
or lie
to myself anymore

You ask me why I pull
away from your touch
Why I will not quiver in your arms.
Why.
Why don't I want you
you ask me
over and over again
there will be no answer.

I will not
let you
let myself
want you
I will not
let truth be your ally
so you may battle
your way into my soul
again.

by jennifer shattuck

Sick Mother's Lament

Can't any of you see
how horrid I feel?
My throat is on fire,
my shout is a squeal.
The wheeze in my chest
is sapping my breath,
while the pain in my head
scares me to death.
I can't sleep at night,
my coughing 's too loud.
I can't function by day,
my brain's in a cloud.
Can't anyone here
do for themselves?
Put the trash in the basket,
the toys on the shelves.
A sandwich is easy
to make if you try,
then wash up your dishes
and God will dry.
I'm sorry to put you
to all of this bother,
but all that I want
is just my own Mother!!

Jeanne Hue

A Special Place

No cars, no sirens, no radios, television, computers, etc. Just the peaceful sound of a small mountain stream passing me by. The sweet smell of spruce looms in the air, and a gentle breeze preserves the aroma. A partridge perched on a stonewall fence absorbing the rays. Deer scrounging for acorns under the crisp autumn leaves and drinking from the cold mountain springs. Beavers building a dam for the trout to swim, and a hawk soaring high above. This is my place to escape, well known since I was a child. this is the other side of life, the side few too many visit. Wrapped up into their everyday dilemmas, Society has its prisoners—and for some there's no chance for parole. Money, more money, new house, new car, new computers, banks, interest, bonds, and when your dead—who cares? What did you get out of life? Don't become another victim of society's jungle, life is too short.

by Jeremy Whalen

Pen and Ink

If I had a pen that was full of ink
I'd sit and I'd write about all that I think.
I'd write it all out, using all the right words
To express all my thoughts about things that I've heard.

if I had a pen and I had some ink
I'd write out my anger and I won't make a stink.
I'd write about hurts and I'd write about pain,
I'd keep writing until my composure I'd gain.

Once I had a pen and I had some ink,
But I went to the kitchen for some water to drink,
And when I returned to my desk again
My paper was there, but where was my pen?

So now I've some paper and I have some ink,
But I don't have a pen so what do you think?
My writing career was over and done, though
I thought many words I never wrote one.

by Faye Arey

Space

Space
out there
serenity and solitude
billions of years
intact
just like the universe
was created yesterday
black darkness
penetrated only by
trillions of stars
burning more than the imaginable.

Planets
aligned in all the ways possible
speaking in a silent
language so that even
the planetary conversation
does not penetrate the silence
the darkness of
space.

by Anonymous

Phantoms,
tangible, yet imagined.
Distorted images,
clutch at my hand.
Cold,
tremulous.

My voice disappears,
Scream of terror dies in my throat,
frozen in place.
Fragments of my day
not horrible by themselves,
Combine to form
inexplicable agony.
Eyes fly open,
glimpse reality,
close again.

by Anonymous

The Cream in My Coffee

I awake every morning to the same daily routine. How lame and boring. why can't I, for Once, wake up with the attitude that today is a brand new day, with new and challenging possibilities. It's too early for that crap, I tell myself. Instead, I just do the same old, same old. Shower, and not a very invigorating one; coffee, instant coffee, not even the real stuff; and breakfast, sometimes, not all the time. For once I'd love to wake up to the sound of birds chirping, bacon and eggs cooking, and fresh-brewed coffee; with a shower like on the TV commercials. I suppose, in real life things just aren't that rosy. I wonder how many people actually awake to all those glorious things. One can dream. I'm the one in charge of my destiny.

Well, it is only the morning, after all. But my whole day is the same. My day ends with the same lacking of intensity with which it began. Eat supper, watch TV, go to bed. You might think I was an eighty-year-old hermit. For once I want a day to be like a classic movie, except in color. Oh, well, maybe things will be different tomorrow. Maybe I'll have cream in my coffee, instead of milk.

by Kathleen Mailloux

Simple

Pieces missing from the puzzle,
No, not a huge 2,000 piece puzzle,
but a little kid's cutout,
Simple, with tractors and trucks.
Life is simple and basic and true—
My life different in ways,
But, hell—I know how to—
drive a tractor and a truck—
And set my table properly,
And sit straight,
And enjoy culture,
And show compassion and kindness,
I know how to smile,
It's okay.

by Dan Patton

Swirl the sand with the green water
Drip the sky onto the vines, long and winding
Melt the sun with the glowing stars
Everything will collide to form morning.

I awoke and found myself still tired
The long swim had taken its toll on my body
Complete darkness beneath the ocean
Deep cold water that split the sky in half

The moon cast its light on the rocks
Stars reflected off the choppy water
In the middle of the night nobody moves
No sounds are heard except the ones in your head

When the sun rises color will appear
All those who slept will open their eyes
And those who were awake will tell a different story
Of how they climbed the darkness and swam in the tide.

by Collin Beaton

When life became too hard to cry,
I sat.
When pain no longer cured the emptiness,
I watched
as summer sank beneath the horizon
and quiet befell the land.
Existence forged on a pile of dust,
blown with the wind
to the farthest reaches of ourselves.
Frustration, hopelessness
dwelled not here.
only the pure and true.
Looking out,
I hear the rhythm
and feel its pounding pulse.
When life holds me to its bosom,
I inhale,
breathing in my own essence
realizing myself
and knowing peace.

by AML

Camel

the bells summon spirit:
not young, not old.
exotic and cosmopolitan
touring the world
with knowing eyes
angled to view
a sure-footed stance
adopting the truth
the hump of reserve
between you and I
a spit of disdain
instead of a cry
rebirth of rain
drinking within
replenishing the slump
filling the tins
sharing a burden
carrying the load
making magic
of desert carpet rides
journeying with mankind
side by side
honey-like elegance
coloring my robe
camel, humps
carrying the load
reserve of water
priceless as gold
steadying along
the brass bells toll.

by Judith A. Durkee

Sweet Music

Shutters closing when I'm drunk
My face feels different every time
I have never been wrong here
Spitting in the face of God
Worshipping my own ignorance
Dancing when I am slapped in the face
And I feel Stupid for taking it
All for
Granted—I feel
Full
Devouring sweet music

Your sweet smell
My head swell
My head empty
But, hey, it's all right
The skies are blue today
An' I'm smilin' like a fool
But I am an ANT
IT'S NOT RIGHT!!!
We are humans are we not?
No animal has ever devoured sweet music
We all have Instincts
But I think we'd rather be cold and distant
Than thoughtful and human
It's easier that way
Because we devour sweet music
And I spit in your ear
Hoping you can't hear
I know what it means to be free
I chase it to
Be free and
For that
I am
Caged

What we all need is to set aside all our thoughts
And give them to someone else for
Corrections in Syntax and Sanity
I've stood by long enough trying to hitch a ride to nowhere
I devour sweet music
And all I want is another view of you through the mirror
After all this time, what have we got?
Educations we don't need
And friends we don't like

But you have to admit
It sure does make for sweet music

by Jeff Landry

Dream of a New Day, or Hope

I dreamt a dream of misty morning air
and drops of dew fell
from prairie grass blades.
The sun arose from beneath
jagged mountain tops where it slept.
Soft red beams of morning dreams
crept up from their angular graves
and ran down the mountain line.
Over sparkling fresh water lakes
and trickling forest streams,
through a host of oaks
that stand guarding their post,
above aromatic fresh green fields
coming to where I lay.
Thus started the morning's
parade. Blue birds chirped
an ancient song.
On the land's crystal pool
landed a swan.

by ESP

A Poem with Special Meaning

On June 6, 1992, my husband of thirty-five years died of AIDS at the age of 55. He was diagnosed in June of 1990, after an open lung biopsy, and several months of illness.

From the time of his diagnosis to the time of his death, our lives were thwart with despair and horror. My husband was a middle-class, working-still father of two. He was a heterosexual with no history of drug abuse or careless living. Yet, he contracted AIDS. How, where, why became immaterial, as slowly and painfully he died.

One would probably question, how could I have put up with his illness? I can only say, it was because I loved my husband; he was a hard-working man that supported and cared for me and my children for many years. He deserved all that I could give, and then some.

Fortunately, I was not infected. But, there is no doubt that I personally lived in fear as I took care of him. AIDS has that kind of hold on caregivers. It's not like taking care of someone with cancer, or heart disease. AIDS is infectious, and it can reach out and touch anyone.

One of the most difficult problems with AIDS is the need to keep it a secret. That's why I have to maintain anonymity, stigma is ever present when it comes to AIDS. For me to tell the whole story, I would have to write a book. Maybe I will someday.

In a literature book, I discovered a poem by Miller Williams, titled "Thinking About Bill, Dead of AIDS." This poem evokes many memories for me and my family. It holds special meaning for me because it speaks of a man named Bill, and that was my husband's name.

"Thinking About Bill, Dead of AIDS"

We did not know the first thing about
how blood surrenders to even the smallest threat
when old allergies turn inside out,

the body rescinding all its normal orders
to all defenders of flesh, betraying the head,
pulling its guards back from all its borders.

Thinking of friends afraid to shake your hand,
we think of your hand shaking, your mouth set,
your eyes drained of any reprimand.

Loving, we kissed you, partly to persuade
both you and us, seeing what eyes had said,
that we were loving and were not afraid.

If we had had more, we would have given more.
As it was we stood next to your bed,
stopping, though, to set our smiles at the door.

Not because we were less sure at the last.
Only because, not knowing anything yet,
we didn't know what look would hurt you least.

~ Miller Williams, 1989

Freewrite (Cat)

A cunning smile on my face and a warm cup of coffee in my hand—so this is where I've come—my mind is gone. So, where do you live? So tell me more. Where do you spend your time? She smiled at me and answered my questions and nothing could be better than talking to her. Nothing could be greater than her curiosity in me but for once I am the one asking the questions—Two on the left and one on the right—that's how it is and how it always will be and the guy sitting behind me—I know he's listening to my little conversation sipping away as if he's remembering past times with past loves—rambling stupid themes where time becomes insane—leaving the restaurant empty—and it never comes down to anything but you without her—if this is how life is to be I might as well say goodbye and wish them all luck—but it's still not the same—not without someone there—why the f*** am I still talking when I know all hope is lost? Why doesn't she stop calling me? I sometimes think to myself that she's interested but lying to myself all along—so why bother? I've been down the road before—I shook Satan's hand and spit in his face—but when I came back I woke up—finally—It's like a nightmare after a nightmare—you know like the old cliched dream sequence when the dreamer has a nightmare than wakes up and finds himself in another nightmare and finally wakes up again and it's finally reality—.

by Jeff Landry

Out One Night, Next to the Ocean, Getting High

It's tradition to us, driving to the edge of the Eastern United States, and fishing off the jetty for blues and stripers, from the uprising of the eye of God until the lid of the eye closes, and the day is gone. Usually, the wind is tormenting the skin of the ocean and our lines are never able to reach out as far as the schools of fish that have collaborated to chase and devour the sand eels and other varieties of smaller fish. We are restricted by depth, and the strong hands of the waves as they attempt to climb up the piled stones of the jetty. So, for warm beer, high winds, high tides, and dry decaying bait, we receive a maximum of two blues, the occasional flounder, and an insane amount of crabs that tear the bait apart before the fish can even smell its oily skin. It all depends on the time of year; if it is in the early fall, stripers are our main course that night. And in the late fall, the blues, and their oily skin, lubricate our fingers as we deep fry their boneless flesh.

It's not as fresh, though, as it is in the summer time. The cold months are more productive with the fish, but the summer months, when the mackerel and pollock are our game, the tourists and their young-adult daughters and sons parade around in their bathing suits, stretching long blonde hair down their soft backs, straight into my eyes. Anyway, every year, my friend (who is female) and I (who am male) manage to catch one or two young souls as they innocently walk the walk of the board. It starts with the question, "Hey, wanna smoke a joint?" and refusal by the other party is not a usual story. And of course we, that is my friend (Bowmen) and I, dress ourselves in masks and deceive the others into thinking that we live here year round. Basically, it comes down to us making new friends, and in turn we invite them to fish with us on the morning of the morrow. Surprisingly, when we arrive at their hotel room at five-thirty in the morning, they are all ready to fish.

It's a rare occasion that Bowmen completes a full day of fishing when she has a new fishing partner. It ends up that she invites her friend on a walk, where they end up in my truck, whereabouts she is more than willing to spread her legs and let the man's tongue slide wild in her velvet mouth. The irony of Bowmen is the fact that she is a virgin. I swear to God, Bowmen is a f***ing virgin! She just likes to have a tongue inside of her. Which I beg to differ with her opinion of virginity when it comes to her and the man on the bench seat of my truck, but I won't get into that. As for me and my fishing partners, I usually wait until the next day to invite them to my apartment and lay their bones across the worn mattress. The fact is, I am usually too afraid to engage in physical contact with a stranger until I have seen through them, and seen their soul.

It is nothing new for Bowmen and me to occasionally create pleasure for each other when we are at a loss of "significant others." We'd discussed this before, that is, I being the king of her golden treasure and taking from her, her virginity. And it was on a soft night in the summer months when her legs

caressed my waist..."I feel like God is inside of me..." she would say. Yeah, felt God inside of her as I was pulsating myself in and out.

After the occasion, a few days later, she met a man, a Latino man the same age as I, (which is nineteen) and to no surprise she took him in. He became the second man to penetrate her silky dress. It wasn't until two months later that she came to my house crying, saying that she had not intentionally spread for him, and that he had raped her. By this time she and I had had many occasions in which we were God all night, slaying each other's sexual fantasies; we were lovers in vain.

It's always been a routine for me that after the summer passes, and the blues begin to run, I get tested. The results are always the same, the doctors shake my hand, and send me on my way with the negative sign on my paper.

So tonight, the air is covered by rain, as wet as the ocean. I am dying. I am a factory for the virus to breed, and kill, and kill, and kill. And I suspect Bowmen the same, I suspect that I contracted the death virus from her silky dress. It is a year later, the sun is warming the air and the tourists are beginning to pull the family vacations and such. In Bowmen's mind, which is extremely suicidal, she is out to broaden herself with more feelings of security as she falls into the arms of young men, infecting them with her ornate death. In my mind, death is inevitable either way it is observed. I am creating death by not informing Bowmen of her problem, and by telling Bowmen that her blood runs hot with poison, I will lose the most intense relationship that I have ever known.

Smoking this magnificent pot, with the lights from the city pouring onto the gray sand of the beach, I become alone in my thoughts. Surrounded by two other souls, Bowmen and her new found love. I've fished all the same as the previous years, with Bowmen still as my companion, she still ignorant of her tragedy. And through my clouded thoughts I hear Bowmen politely say,

"Hey, Christian, give me the keys to your truck..."

by Ryan Regan

Snowcone Days

With my snowcone in hand, sticky fingers, and rainbow colored mouth, I really loved those days. Days when we were all together. Summer weekend afternoons with a new adventure all the time. I can still feel the icy cold sensation of it running down my throat. Slurping and slushing each bite between my teeth. It was so cold I would get an awful headache. But I didn't care. I don't even think I noticed that then. My shirt looked like I had finger painted all over myself by the time I was finished. Still, I didn't care. I wish I had one of those snowcones now. Although it probably wouldn't taste the same. My fingers would be dirty, and my shirt...hey, I paid twenty dollars for this shirt! I wish I had one now; to freeze all the nonsense in my head since I've grown up. To have that same mentality and outlook on life that I did then. To be that scruffy little kid that didn't care how I looked or what anyone thought. All I cared about was the next adventure, not even knowing where I was going, or what I was headed for. Sometimes I won and sometimes I didn't. Even though those days are gone forever, I think of them often. Especially when I see a six-year-old eating a snowcone.

by Kathleen Mailloux

Walk through to this side. Come on, what are you waiting for? I see. You're not sure if you can get past the barriers. Don't worry. I can help you through. All it takes is a little self-examination.

For those of you playing along, let's begin. First, you must reach deep inside yourself and palm your heart. It is feels right, you'll be able to tell immediately. If your heart is warm to the touch and keeps a steady, rhythmic, pulsating beat, then you passed the first step. However, if your heart felt lukewarm, or even cold, and had an unsteady beat, simply lower your head and walk away. I can help you no further. Maybe someday you can work your heart into shape—that is, if you really *work* it.

For those who passed the first step, here is the second. With both hands now, squeeze the air out of both lungs. After doing this, if you gasped for air yearningly, you passed. You may stay for now. However, if you felt little or no difference upon ridding your lungs of the air, as stated before, you may leave.

Here is the last step. Reach inside your head and ball up your brain compactly, until it can be compressed no further. Now release your brain. If it bounced back to its original shape and size, you passed. If your brain remained that compact little sphere, then you failed. Those who failed this last step have to leave now, but those who didn't may walk through. When you walk through to this side, you really haven't traveled anywhere at all. Your travels have just begun.

by Craig Mazzola

Daddy's Little Girl

She has big brown eyes.
Dark hair upon her little head.
Nose small like a button.
Her smile beautiful as it could be.
She's Daddy's little girl.

Just learned to walk.
Pigtails in her hair.
Does everything she's told to do
She's Daddy's little girl.

First day of school,
Recess was great,
But show-and-tell was the best.
She's Daddy's little girl.

High School, a job;
She was always on the go.
Prom soon came and next year would be graduation.
Graduation came.
Dad was more proud of her than anyone.
She's Daddy's little girl.

She finally moved out on her own.
When times were tough: Dad was always there.
Met a nice young man.
Soon a wedding was planned.
She's Daddy's little girl.

Walking up the aisle, with her arm in his.
Daddy happily said, "I give her away."
As he watched her say "I do!"
A tear ran down his face.
He whispered to himself,
"She still will always be..."
Daddy's Little Girl

by Sherry Phelps

An as of yet untitled work...

As I passed the hall of stones,
I saw some with two dates, some with four.
Some had six, others had more.
One little stone caught my attention,
it's two years read "1900" and "1964."
I couldn't help but wonder
of this man who died before I was born.
Lived to the age of 64.
Or 8 by 8, or 16 by 4.
Over half a century lived,
This was all he had to show.
Just a simple, lonely stone.
With two dates, both all alone.
And I ask myself,
Was he rich?
Was he merry?
Was he acquainted with a Gene, a Rich, or Terry.
What did he love?
What was his hate?
Was he poor and worn but full of heart?
or was he cold and empty on his estate?
Was his box adorned?
Was his loss mourned?
I don't know.
Did he leave anything behind?
In his 64?
Except his stone,
and his legacy, to atone.

by Chris Banahan

As I pick up my pen and write this essay, I know that the usual comments and criticisms will follow. Questions of my sanity may be raised. There is no great paradox or hidden meaning. You may even find my thoughts nothing less than ludicrous, but I am forced to ask the question...

Have you ever seen a dog smile? No, really, just taken the time to see him smile? Some dogs you can make smile, but I think that you have to know him very well, or be particularly amusing in a canine sort of way.

I remember quite clearly the first time that a dog smiled at me; I swear, he winked, too. I thought that my eyes had played a trick on me, so, as I walked away I simply had to turn and look again. His eyes twinkled, but there was no smile. Must've been my eyes playing tricks on me. So I went on my way and missed the concept entirely. That is, until I picked up a collection of stories by John Steinbeck. It seems that Mr. Steinbeck had witnessed this phenomenon as well. But, as luck would have it, I wouldn't see another dog smile until...

Let me first tell you, when I saw that dog smile the first time, I couldn't shake it from my mind. So once, and only once, while I was out at a Pub, I made the mistake of asking the patrons there (a mixed group to say the least, some rather notorious), if they had, like myself, ever seen a dog smile. You can imagine the response. The expected, but somewhat unexpected by me, onslaught of remarks that followed! Remarks, more remarks, a variety of remarks! Of men being dogs and who at times do smile—sometimes for no reason—or when you least expect it. Then, the men returned with the female dog remarks, addressing the women of the room, in particular the barmaid, who was not undeserving of the commentaries that ensued from my seemingly innocent question.

Anyway, returning to our story...one day, I was having a particularly bad day. Nothing was going right and every task that I attempted seemed arduous. I decided it best to give up and take out my dog, Rex. Rex had been watching me all day, attentive to my plight, it seemed. I began speaking to him, discussing the trials of the day, and I would speak for him whenever I was in need of a response. It was curiously amusing, speaking for the dog; and it lifted my spirits considerably, as sometimes we can only do for ourselves. We went to his favorite stomping grounds and I set him free. After a while the sun began to set, so I decided it to be time for him to take a swim in the pond playing “fetch,” and then we would go. I told Rex this, and, although he disagreed, he knew that he had no choice. I threw the stick. He returned the stick, just out of reach in the water. I waded into the water to get it, and Rex grabbed it, just to move it a bit farther. Too late! My body was already in motion. Balance lost, I fell in. As I was falling, I looked up and could've sworn that he was smiling. We walked home, me dripping wet, and he with tail wagging. The family returned. Rex was excited, as usual. I took it upon myself to speak for him as he greeted each member, one by one. Just then it happened. The sides of his mouth went up! His teeth showed! He wasn't just smiling—that dog was grinning!!

So, as you pass through your busy day, look around you. You may be missing something, something, something as unique and rare to see as a dog's smile.

by Diane S. Talbot

Renaissance

The shell is cracking,
and pieces of pain
like part of a warm, snuggly comforter,
extrude through the fissures.
Pain that you had locked away
for a long, long time.
But you took it out, now and again,
to worry at,
like a cavity in a tooth.
After awhile, it became familiar,
scabbed over like a wound,
and seemed to belong to some other person,
in some other time.
But now, it's escaping,
to be replaced by who knows what...
joy,
fear,
despair,
or perhaps more pain--
the unknown kind,
that takes hold of you
and announces its presence at every turning.
You thought you had it under control,
foolish you! Don't you know
that no one lives in a vacuum?
Interrelationships
will eventually erode the layers away,
and you will be exposed.
And the shell does not allow itself
to be repaired.

by Jeanne Hue

Flat Notes

I walked to the end of my road tonight hoping to meet
Satan and his Father playing a card game in the power of the moon's
light. I found myself next to a dead cat. The same cat that I fed popcorn
to the night I was drinking beer alone on my porch, looking in the sky
for Satan to come. The cat's head was flat like a dull note on the trombone.
C sharp is the same as D flat and so on. And I forgot how to cry for
the dead. the cat's face was facing the trees, it's eyelids slid over
it's eyes when the tire ran like steel over it's brain. I once stepped
on a blueberry muffin that had fallen to my kitchen floor. The blueberries spread
over the blonde muffin like blood.
That was the cat's face.
Stuffed like a coin into the tar road.
Two cars passed by. Flowing calmly over the cat's corpse.
I stood on the side of the road and imagined what it would be like
if one of the cars saw me standing like Christ over the cat.
I imagined what it would be like to watch them turn their car around
in a stranger's driveway and come back to ask me if it was my cat.
Their engine would tick softly, and we'd both stand over the cat
poking it's bloated figure with our shoes.
But both cars passed through.
I am the only one who fed the cat
popcorn. I was it's only companion. It rubbed up against
my leg and purred as I placed some milk
on the ground.
Dogs will run by and sniff the corpse
like a candy cane.
Satan will come in the form of flies and crows and
pink-faced vultures, and feast away.

by Ryan Regan

The Microchip God

Listen to the electronic digitalized "beep"
of the time clock hanging on the wall.
Follow the master like sheep
over the stony ledge to a spiraling fall.
Come at the insistent call
of the telephones beckoning echoing ring.
You must dance for the master when the fiber-optics sing.
Sacrificed on cold steel altar
for silicone implants.
microchip brain to cure the insane.

Obey!

Obey!

Obey!

The microchip God

Pistons of the 65 Chevy burst
alive
hot gasoline to quench the machine's thirst
the odometer clicks 666.

Give thanks to the microwave
who prepared this meal
through the miracles of modern science.

The master calls his servants
to the mountain top altar
where the thermonuclear thunderbolt lies.
Upon Olympus the machine
crunches numbers,
boils statistics,
and calculates,
the human race's fate.

The caged red sirens on the walls
scream in terror
as mankind falls
“Evacuate”
“Evacuate”
“too late!”

Succumb to the master!
Bow down before your VCR!
Offer up your first-born
to CD-ROM!
Give your soul to the one with the highest bit!

OBEY!

OBEY!

OBEY!

THE MICROCHIP GOD!
THE SATELLITE MESSIAH HAS COME!

by ESP.

The decision to sit on a bench and enjoy the warmth of the day brought my assignment to me. Three girls plopped themselves down on the bench to my right, but not before one of them dropped her backbreaking pile of books onto the cement. The sound of WHAP startled me so that I turned and summoned up my sternest “Mom Look.” I need not have bothered because they were immediately engrossed in their staccato banter and were not aware of my presence.

I couldn’t help but hear them because of their high pitched sounds. They used the lingo of their age with ‘*LIKE*’ peppering their conversation. As we all sat there for our own reasons—mine was now eavesdropping—it became evident that this trio had lots to say. Quickly, however, the eavesdropping became an interest in *how* they were talking and not *what* they were saying. I was absolutely amazed at their ability to use the interjection ‘*LIKE*’ so fluidly: “*Like* my mother *like* said”; “*Like* where will we *like* go after school?”; “*Like* what did you *like* do last weekend?”

Should I interrupt them to congratulate them at having mastered this art? I think not—they would probably stare at me and say, “*Like* what did you *like* say?”

by Val Schedin

Lilacs

Those pretty purple flowers
Delightful and dainty
Is what I miss the most.

Sitting on the front porch,
Listening to the sounds of the city.
As a gentle breeze refreshes me
I can smell them.
They fill the air.
They make you forget where you are.

You dream of countrysides,
Expansive fields of greens and golds,
Of rivers and little knolls.

Then you hear the fire truck and police siren ring.
You awake and there you are.
On the front porch.

by Rose Rosko

Flowers of Poetry

The eyes of God open
and the sun is a new life
for everything it touches.

Standing in the doorway,
I noticed the willow tree
had bred her yearly
angels.

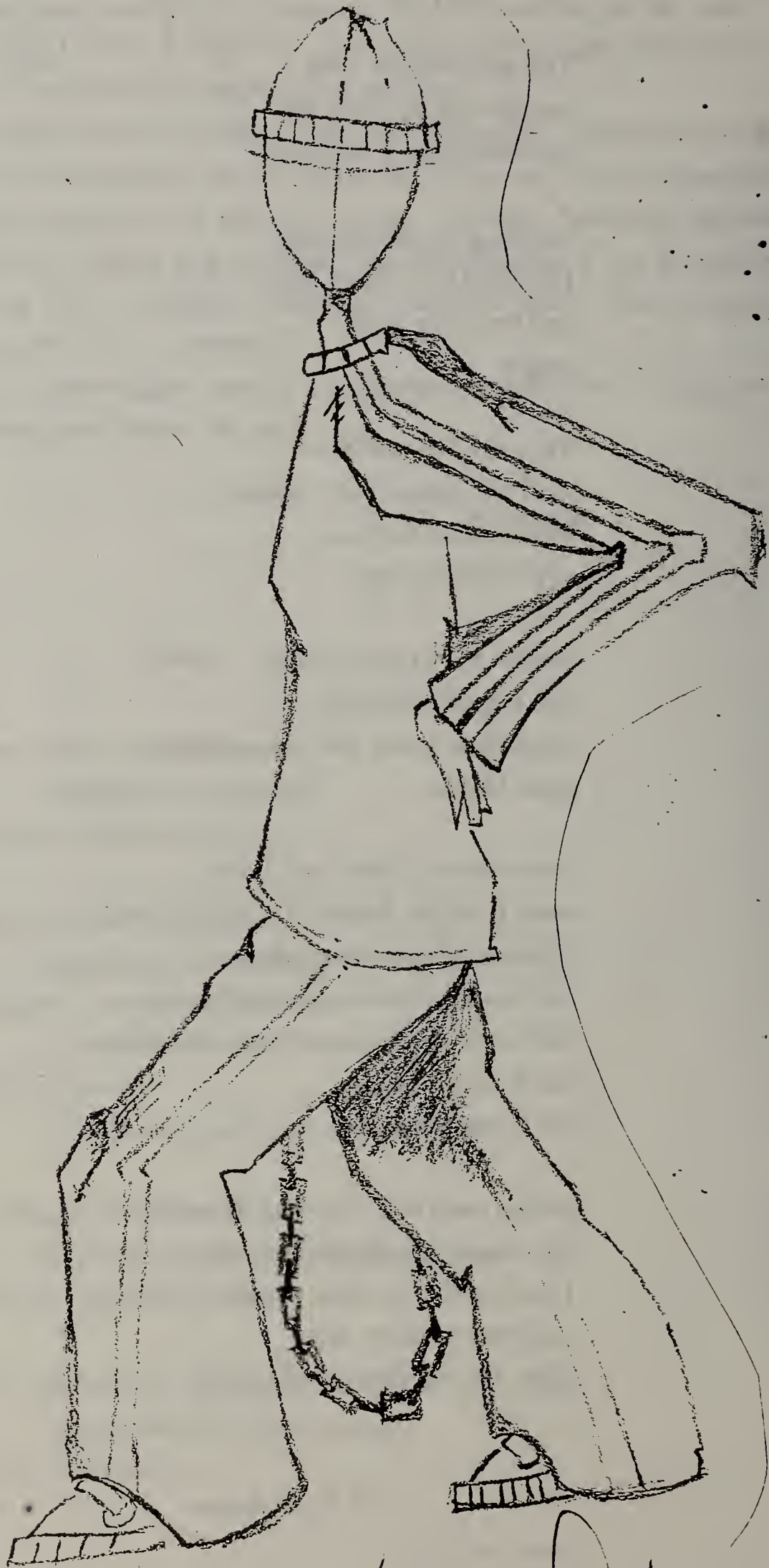
They are new children
And they wear their rubbery
white petals as clean
as a wedding ring.

And so they spread today,
like angels hovering
ten inches above the camouflaged
grass blades.

I tore three of their soft bodies
away from the hands of the branches,
I delivered them like a doctor,
and placed them on the wall in my
bedroom, in the exact place where the
sun makes a home
every morning.

Just so each day, even the days when
the clouds are shading my sky,
I can notice my three angels
and their rubbery skin,
glow like a reflection of Christ.

by Ryan Regan



K. Cuy